

## 228 SIMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER

and when you raise your voices for pity  
and justice my task will  
be accomplished.

"Yes, a cry of pity, an appeal for justice, I  
ask no more. Should  
the soil still crack, should the disasters  
predicted convulse the  
•world to-morrow, it will be because nay  
voice will have remained  
unheard."

Thus, in "Germinal," Zola gave rein to his  
humanita-  
rian feelings, and in recognition thereof prudes  
shrieked  
indignantly: "That man is at it again ! What  
a beast he  
must be!" And on their side capitalists,  
battening on the  
labour of the poor and alarmed for the safety of  
their pelf,  
howled in chorus: "This book ought to be  
suppressed, it  
certainly must not be allowed as a play. It  
means revolution,  
robbery, rascality of every kind."

But Zola, though he suffered secretly, — all  
unjust at-  
tacks brought him the keenest suffering, —  
hid it, and  
passed on.

There was a touch of humanitarianism even  
in his next  
book, "L'CEuvre," for it set forth many of the  
evils of bohe-  
mian life, and embraced an appeal for woman  
in the person  
of the unhappy Christine, its heroine. Critics  
may shake  
their heads, indeed some have done so, and  
say sapiently:  
"All this was not art." They may laugh, too, at  
the idea of  
reforming the world by novels. But even if,  
judging Zola  
by some of his books, one may occasionally feel

inclined to  
set no very lofty estimate on his artistry,  
surely the trend  
of his works, the knowledge of their aim, the  
circumstances  
under which they were written, must increase  
one's respect  
for their author as a man. And, after all, what  
is the mere  
artist? As often as not he is penned within a  
fanatical  
creed, bound to narrow formulas, blind to  
everything beyond